

This parable is found only in the gospel of Luke. It is often called the parable of the great supper, but we wrongly called it the parable of the wedding feast, but it does not state that the celebratory supper was at the time of a wedding. The parable of the wedding feast is actually earlier in the same chapter at verses 7-11, and will be considered on another occasion, God willing. It sets out the aspect that despite the advantage and blessing of being a guest at a function where the host would provide for their comfort and indulgence, many do not appreciate and properly value this and instead show contempt and disregard for the host by their refusal to attend. This would often have been a celebration event but the actual occasion why the host had chosen to celebrate is not stated. Culturally there was a stigma associated with declining such a kind invitation. The food and drink which would be provided was determined by the host, but his reputation was at stake if he did not provide something noteworthy and memorable. He would be justly criticised if he fell short in furnishing a suitable feast as this "*great supper*". However, we must not look for anything bound merely by cultural issues of a specific era, Christ's teachings are timeless and can be discerned by the avid reader and meditator upon the word. There is no need to know first century Jewish customs however helpful that might prove to be in some, non-vital issues.

The parable was told in response to a remark made by a dinner guest who said, "*Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God*". This appears to be a straightforward comment made by someone who was looking forward to being a participant in that coming Kingdom. Jesus was a guest to a supper to which he had accepted an invitation by one of the chief Pharisees, see verse 1. How genuine this was in so far as the Pharisees had no great love or respect for him and that their interactions were often with the purpose of setting a trap for him to be exposed as the charlatan, they imagined him to be. This guest may have been a Pharisee or a lawyer, but it does not say which, however it is unlikely he was a disciple.

Just before the parable Jesus addressed the host in verses 12-14, "*When thou makest a dinner or supper, call not thy friends nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours: lest they also bide thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast call the poor the maimed the lame the blind: And thou shalt be blessed for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just*". Asking those who society sidelines to celebrate with you is not a natural thing to do it goes against our instincts and prejudices. We prefer the safe and comforting presence of those with whom we are familiar and who we already respect and like. The Bible challenges us to go outside our comfort zone and interact with those who are not of our regular habitat and choice.

In addition, the introduction of the Resurrection of the Just into the conversation shows that Jesus was not talking about anything else, but the future promised in the Word of God after death. Those who will be raised at that time are not everyone who has ever lived but those whom God determines are responsible to face judgment. These comments are meant to be reflected upon by those who have a desire to live their lives outside the natural arrangements of the flesh and instead to be guided by the spirit and its teachings obtained from the Word of the God of Israel. That these were religious Jews who were addressed by Jesus should not come as a surprised. Although the

Pharisees were a sect within Judaism called out by Jesus for their hypocrisy, they had a form of righteousness and were partly (but not fully) blinded, Romans 11v25. There was hope for repentance and they had a starting point of the oracles of God given to Israel.

The parable Jesus told was in keeping with what he had already said. He was addressing religious jews about the Kingdom of God. It has a simplistic superficial meaning that you should accept the blessings that come your way whilst you can and not to squander any opportunity to enjoy the hospitality of others as you will not know when that might be repeated, but that is not the essential purpose of what Jesus wished to communicate, he operated on a much deeper spiritual level.

The elements of the parable are the following:

The man who made the Great Supper	God, the host of all
The great Supper itself	Reward of future fellowship
Those bidden to the supper	The religious Jews
The servant of the host	The Lord Jesus Christ
The universal response received	Rejection of the gospel
First excuse: bought land	Confidence in their inheritance
Second excuse: bought oxen	Complacency in God's favour
Third excuse: had married a wife	Wedded to the Mosaic
The streets and lanes of the city	The spiritual habitation
The poor, maimed, halt and blind	The despised & cursed gentiles
Still room for more	The Kingdom has extra places
Highways and hedges	Non-religious Jews of diaspora
Compel them to come	New Covenant with Israel
My house shall be filled	God will locate a multitude
The original bidden excluded	Danger of Religious bigotry

That God has condescended to offer mankind at large and the Jews in particular a future reward is the good news of the Gospel. This offer is made through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ who was anticipated and therefore a motivation even before he was born because he was alive in the mind of God before he existed. The advantage of the Jewish people was not valued and appreciated by them. They became complacent – *“we are the people evil shall not come nigh upon us”*. They felt that they had better things to do than accept God's gracious offer for a future reward and instead became distracted and deluded by what this world has to offer now, this included their fixed and false loyalty to the Mosaic which they could not keep and had significantly revised to suit their own opinions and biases. Others who were cursed by God, the disadvantaged, the poor the maimed the halt and the blind were to the Jews surprisingly and contrary

to their natural inclinations to be offered a place at the table. This was to their great disquiet and discomfort.

Those who lived outside civilisation, in the hedgerows and highways, were to be made to attend the supper, not in the same way as those who had accepted the gracious offer, and were therefore the saints largely gentiles, in the context of the parable, but as the mortal inhabitants of the Kingdom who were given no choice but compelled to attend. God never makes people accept the gospel, so this element of the parable needs to be carefully considered.

The purpose of God is included in the details of the parable in the statement – *“that My House may be filled”*. God to be manifested in a multitude. This to include all elements of humanity whether Jew or gentile, rich or poor, male or female, and even immortal and mortal although that is part of the development of the divine Name, Yahweh Elohim.

There is danger in bringing our own views and opinions to the table. If we are not careful, we can become distracted like the pious Jews of Jesus day and generation who *“had no need of repentance”*. We must become of that class of religious bigots who are self-satisfied and caught up with our own distractions, thinking that we have our reward now in this life, thinking that any blessings God grants now are sufficient to deny us looking to the future inheritance, and to be wedded to a wife which might get in the way of concentrating upon the future hope. Although aimed at the religious Jews whom he personally encountered, this parable can reflect upon our own situation and has different layers of meaning as we have come to expect when carefully analysing Christ’s parables for ourselves.

The response to this parable was not recorded but the Pharisees and lawyers must have known that he had spoken this parable against them. He left them and went out into the multitudes v25, which accompanied him. But these too would turn their backs upon him and buy for his blood as a failure when the Romans crucified him, unaware that that was his victory not his defeat. The multitudes rejected him then because they did not understand the purpose of his death, but instead dismissed him as a failure like themselves, no different from the sinners and blasphemers they were. *“The people perished for lack of knowledge”*.